

I have been asked to set down reasons why the Topographic Intelligence Studies produced in the Geographic Sub-Division of the Europe-Africa Division were considered so good. Following are some reasons:

(1) They were the first complete areal studies produced by American intelligence agencies. They covered all the important material and physical aspects of an area and were written to be useful for military operations. As such they reaped the reward of the pioneer and were taken as models for later studies by others. Specifically they served as the model for JANIS, which has since become the standard work in the topographic intelligence field.

(2) One of the more important assets of the studies was their preparation by specialists in each functional topic. Instead of one person having to cover the gamut of topics in an area ranging from climate through terrain, ports, railroads, roads, communications, power, resources, etc., each of the individual topics was assigned to one person or one team with experience in a specialized field. Even if not all the researchers had experience in each topical field, through concentration they were able to learn the subject thoroughly and do a vastly better job in a short time. At the same time, with their birdseye geographic view, the researchers were able to place their facts in proper perspective in relation to the problems involved.

(3) Along with topical specialization in research went a careful organization of the material and a check on the manner of presentation. In some fields where there was an expert, the expert at first produced little of use because his material was neither organized nor written properly. The geographers who acted as supervisors and directors of the studies performed particularly valuable service in preparing detailed outlines in advance of each study and in rewriting many of the studies after the first draft had been submitted. In this way the studies were not only shortened materially but even more important were pointed-up and made intelligible and useful. The geographers were able to assist greatly in this work because their past training had taught them how to organize and present data about areas, both in text and on maps. Basically the presentation of the Topographical Intelligence Studies was a description and analysis of areas so presented as to bring out clearly the essential pattern and relationships within the area and the differences between areas. Cultural and economic facts, as well as physical facts, were treated in regard to their specific locations and relations to the terrain and to each other, rather than merely as statistics lumped together in political divisions as was the case in some other studies.

(4) Particular stress was laid on obtaining all the relevant information needed for the studies. In this connection the historians aided greatly because their past training had taught them how to gather and use sources and to work in a careful fashion. Although time never permitted examination of all the sources that could have been used, many more sources were examined than was customary in this type of work. The use of foreign technical sources for all basic information particularly distinguished the T.I. studies. In this sense original research was done instead of a mere rewriting of previous intelligence reports. Foreign Government official reports and documents and technical journals, as well as maps, were used profusely. The ability of the researchers to handle foreign languages gave T.I. a great advantage over some of the intelligence agencies which had to depend upon translators. T.I. studies were particularly noteworthy in the amount of leg work done by the researchers. Standard practice was to check files of MIS, ONI, Library of Congress, and sources of specialized data varying with each topic, such as: Bureau of Railway Economics Library, Office Chief of Engineers, Geological Survey, Hydrographic Office, Department of Agriculture, Department of Commerce, Weather Bureau, Surgeon General's Office, A-2, and many others, each of which was authoritative in some special field. In addition, the various embassies, Survey of Foreign Experts, and other persons with local knowledge of the area were consulted. Time never permitted us to make as much of a check of persons with local knowledge as desired. In this regard, [REDACTED] established a comprehensive contact register which enabled it to readily obtain qualified persons

with firsthand knowledge of areas under study. We had no such service, other than the Survey of Foreign Experts, which did its own interviewing.

To conclude and summarize, the studies were good because they were done by good personnel and directed by good personnel. Hard work and thought were put into combining the talents of the topical specialist, the geographer, and the historian - each with his distinctive contribution. As noted before, we created most of the specialists by enabling them to concentrate on one or two topics until they gained competence. Originally we were weak on the specialist side but had the great asset of tackling the problem as intelligent researchers. The problem was fundamentally one of research, and sound research techniques were applied. In the process we uncovered many good researchers and concomitantly had to drop several who came to us with good research reputations. The end product was the creation of a nucleus of trained topographic intelligence specialists and synthesizers. Such a group differed from many of the ordinary topical specialists in government who knew their subject but were unable to adapt their materials to fit intelligence needs or could not do sound research on foreign areas, and present it properly.

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